The Analytic-Synthetic Dichotomy by Leonard Peikoff

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Introduction

Some years ago, I was defending capitalism in a discussion with a prominent professor of philosophy. In answer to his charge that capitalism leads to coercive monopolies, I explained that such monopolies are caused by government intervention in the economy and are logically impossible under capitalism. (For a discussion of this issue, see *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal.)* The professor was singularly unmoved by my argument, replying, with a show of surprise and disdain:

"*Logically* impossible? Of course—granted your definitions. You're merely saying that, no matter what proportion of the market it controls, you won't call a business a 'coercive monopoly' if it occurs in a system you call 'capitalism.' Your view is true by arbitrary fiat, it's a matter of semantics, it's *logically* true but not *factually* true. Leave logic aside now; be serious and consider the actual empirical facts on this matter."

To the philosophically uninitiated, this response will be baffling. Yet they meet its equivalents everywhere today. The tenets underlying it permeate our intellectual atmosphere like the germs of an epistemological black plague waiting to infect and cut down any idea that claims the support of conclusive logical argumentation, a plague that spreads subjectivism and conceptual devastation in its wake.

This plague is a formal theory in technical philosophy; it is called: *the analytic-synthetic dichotomy.* It is accepted, in some form, by virtually every influential contemporary philosopher—pragmatist, logical positivist, analyst and existentialist alike.

The theory of the analytic-synthetic dichotomy penetrates every corner of our culture, reaching, directly or indirectly, into every human life, issue and concern. Its carriers are many, its forms subtly diverse, its basic causes complex and hidden—and its early symptoms prosaic and seemingly benign. But it is deadly.

The comparison to a plague is not, however, fully exact. A plague attacks man's body, not his conceptual faculty. And it is not launched by the profession paid to protect men from it.

Today, each man must be his own intellectual protector. In whatever guise the theory of the analytic-synthetic dichotomy confronts him, he must be able to detect it, to understand it, and to answer it. Only thus can he withstand the onslaught and remain epistemologically untouched.

The theory in question is not a philosophical primary; one's position on it, whether it be agreement or opposition, derives, in substantial part, from one's view of the nature of concepts. The Objectivist theory of concepts is presented above, in Ayn Rand's *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology.* In the present discussion, I shall build on this foundation. I shall summarize the theory of the analytic-synthetic dichotomy as it would be expounded by its contemporary advocates, and then answer it point by point.

The theory was originated, by implication, in the ancient world, with the views of Pythagoras and Plato, but it achieved real prominence and enduring influence only after its advocacy by such modern philosophers as Hobbes, Leibniz, Hume and Kant. (The theory was given its present name by Kant.) In its dominant contemporary form, the theory states that there is a fundamental cleavage in human knowledge, which divides propositions or truths into two mutually exclusive (and jointly exhaustive) types. These types differ, it is claimed, in their origins, their referents, their cognitive status, and the means by which they are validated. In particular, four central points of difference are alleged to distinguish the two types.

a. Consider the following pairs of true propositions:

i) A man is a rational animal.
ii) A man has only two eyes.
i) Ice is a solid.
ii) Ice floats on water.
i) 2 plus 2 equals 4.

ii) 2 qts. of water mixed with 2 qts. of ethyl alcohol yield 3.86 qts. of liquid, at 15.56°C.

The first proposition in each of these pairs, it is said, can be validated *merely by an analysis of the meaning of its constituent concepts* (thus, these are called *"analytic"* truths). If one merely specifies the definitions of the relevant concepts in any of these propositions, and then applies the laws of logic, one can see that the truth of the proposition follows directly, and that to deny it would be to endorse a logical contradiction. Hence, these are also called "logical truths," meaning that they can be validated merely by correctly applying the laws of logic.

Thus, if one were to declare that "A man is *not* a rational animal," or that "2 plus 2 does *not* equal 4," one would be maintaining by implication that "A rational animal is *not* a rational animal," or that "1 plus 1 plus 1 plus 1, does *not* equal 1 plus 1 plus 1 plus 1"—both of which are self-contradictory. (The illustration presupposes that "rational animal" is the definition of "man.") A similar type of self-contradiction would occur if one denied that "Ice is a solid."

Analytic truths represent concrete instances of the Law of Identity; as such, they are also frequently called "tautologies" (which, etymologically, means that the proposition repeats "the same thing"; e.g., "A rational animal is a rational animal," "The solid form of water is a solid"). Since all of the propositions of logic and mathematics can ultimately be analyzed and validated in this fashion, these two subjects, it is claimed, fall entirely within the "analytic" or "tautological" half of human knowledge.

Synthetic propositions, on the other hand—illustrated by the second proposition in each of the above pairs, and by most of the statements of daily life and of the sciences—are said to be entirely different on all these counts. A "synthetic" proposition is defined as one which *cannot* be validated merely by an analysis of the meanings or definitions of its constituent concepts. For instance, conceptual or definitional analysis alone, it is claimed, could not tell one whether ice floats on water, or what volume of liquid results when various quantities of water and ethyl alcohol are mixed.

In this type of case, said Kant, the predicate of the proposition (e.g., "floats on water") states something about the subject ("ice") which is not already contained in the meaning of the subject-concept. (The proposition represents a *synthesis* of the subject with a new predicate, hence the name.) Such truths cannot be validated merely by correctly applying the laws of logic; they do not represent concrete instances of the Law of Identity. To deny such truths is to maintain *a falsehood,* but *not a self-contradiction.* Thus, it is false to assert that "A man has three eyes," or that "Ice sinks in water"—but, it is said, these assertions are not self-contradictory. It is the facts of the case, not the laws of logic, which condemn such statements. Accordingly, synthetic truths are held to be "factual," as opposed to "logical" or "tautological" in character.

b. Analytic truths are *necessary;* no matter what region of space or what period of time one considers, such propositions *must* hold true. Indeed, they are said to be true not only throughout the universe which actually exists, but in "all possible worlds"—to use Leibniz's famous phrase. Since its denial is self-contradictory, the opposite of any analytic truth is unimaginable and inconceivable. A visitor from an alien planet might relate many unexpected marvels, but his claims would be rejected out-of-hand if he announced that, in his world, ice was a gas, man was a postage stamp, and 2 plus 2 equaled 7.3.

Synthetic truths, however, are declared *not* to be necessary; they are called *"contingent."* This means: As a matter of fact, in the actual world that men now observe, such propositions *happen to be* true—but they do not *have to be* true. They are not true in "all possible worlds." Since its denial is not self-contradictory, the opposite of any synthetic truth is at least imaginable or conceivable. It is imaginable or conceivable that men should have an extra eye (or a baker's dozen of such eyes) in the back of their heads, or that ice should sink in water like a stone, etc. These things do not occur in our experience but, it is claimed, there is no logical necessity about this. The facts stated by synthetic truths are "brute" facts, which no amount of logic can make fully intelligible.

Can one conclusively *prove* a synthetic proposition? Can one ever be logically *certain* of its truth? The answer given is: "No. As a

matter of logic, no synthetic proposition 'has to be' true; the opposite of any is conceivable." (The most uncompromising advocates of the analytic-synthetic dichotomy continue: "You cannot even be certain of the direct evidence of your senses—for instance, that you now see a patch of red before you. In classifying what you see as 'red,' you are implicitly declaring that it is similar in color to certain of your past experiences—and how do you know that you have remembered these latter correctly? That man's memory is reliable, is not a tautology; the opposite is conceivable.") Thus, the most one can ever claim for synthetic, contingent truths is some measure of probability; they are more-or-less-likely hypotheses.

c. Since analytic propositions are "logically" true, they can, it is claimed, be validated *independently of experience;* they are "non-empirical" or "a priori' (today, these terms mean: "independent of experience"). Modern philosophers grant that some experience is required to enable a man to form concepts; their point is that, once the appropriate concepts have been formed (e.g., "ice," "solid,", "water," etc.), no *further* experience is required to validate their combination into an analytically true proposition (e.g., "Ice is solid water"). The proposition follows simply from an analysis of definitions.

   Synthetic truths, on the other hand, are said to be *dependent upon experience* for their validation; they are "empirical" or "a posteriori." Since they are "factual," one can discover their truth initially only by observing the appropriate facts directly or indirectly; and since they are "contingent," one can find out whether yesterday's synthetic truths are still holding today, only by scrutinizing the latest empirical data.

d. Now we reach the climax: the characteristically twentieth-century *explanation* of the foregoing differences. It is: *Analytic propositions provide no information about reality, they do not describe facts, they are "non-ontological"* (i.e., do not pertain to reality). Analytic truths, it is held, are created and sustained by men's arbitrary decision to use words (or concepts) in a certain fashion, they merely record the implications of linguistic (or conceptual) *conventions.* This, it is claimed, is what accounts for the characteristics of analytic

> truths. They are non-empirical—because they say nothing about the world of experience. No fact can ever cast doubt upon them, they are immune from future correction—because they are immune from reality. They are necessary—because men make them so.

"The propositions of logic," said Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus,* "all say the same thing: that is, nothing." "The principles of logic and mathematics," said A. J. Ayer in *Language, Truth and Logic,* "are true universally simply because we never allow them to be anything else."

Synthetic propositions, on the other hand, *are* factual—and for this, man pays a price. The price is that they are contingent, uncertain and unprovable.

The theory of the analytic-synthetic dichotomy presents men with the following choice: If your statement is proved, it says nothing about that which exists; if it is about existents, it cannot be proved. If it is demonstrated by logical argument, it represents a subjective convention; if it asserts a fact, logic cannot establish it. If you validate it by an appeal to the meanings of your *concepts,* then it is cut off from reality; if you validate it by an appeal to your *percepts,* then you cannot be certain of it.

Objectivism rejects the theory of the analytic-synthetic dichotomy as false—in principle, at root, and in every one of its variants.

Now, let us analyze and answer this theory point by point.

"Analytic" and "Synthetic" Truths

An analytic proposition is defined as one which can be validated merely by an analysis of the meaning of its constituent concepts. The critical question is: *What is included in "the meaning of a concept"?* Does a concept mean the existents which it subsumes, including *all* their characteristics? Or does it mean only certain aspects of these existents, designating some of their characteristics but excluding others?

The latter viewpoint is fundamental to every version of the analytic-synthetic dichotomy. The advocates of this dichotomy divide the characteristics of the existents subsumed under a concept into two groups: those which are *included* in the meaning of the concept, and those—the great majority—which, they claim, are *excluded* from its meaning. The

dichotomy among propositions follows directly. If a proposition links the "included" characteristics with the concept, it can be validated merely by an "analysis" of the concept; if it links the "excluded" characteristics with the concept, it represents an act of "synthesis."

For example: it is commonly held that, out of the vast number of man's characteristics (anatomical, physiological, psychological, etc.), *two*—"rationality" and "animality"—constitute the entire meaning of the *concept* "man." All the rest, it is held, are outside the concept's meaning. On this view, it is "analytic" to state that "A man is a rational animal" (the predicate is "included" in the subject-concept), but "synthetic" to state that "A man has only two eyes" (the predicate is "excluded").

The primary historical source of the theory that a concept includes some of an entity's characteristics but excludes others, is the Platonic realist theory of universals. Platonism holds that concepts designate non-material essences (universals) subsisting in a supernatural dimension. Our world, Plato claimed, is only the reflection of these essences, in a material form. On this view, a physical entity possesses two very different types of characteristics: those which reflect its supernatural essence, and those which arise from the fact that, in this world, the essence is manifest in material form. The first are "essential" to the entity, and constitute its real nature; the second are matter-generated "accidents." Since concepts are said to designate essences, the concept of an entity includes its "essential" characteristics, but excludes its "accidents."

How does one differentiate "accidents" from "essential" characteristics in a particular case? The Platonists' ultimate answer is: By an act of "intuition."

(A more plausible and naturalistic variant of the essence-accident dichotomy is endorsed by Aristotelians; on this point, their theory of concepts reflects a strong Platonic influence.)

In the modern era, Platonic realism lost favor among philosophers; nominalism progressively became the dominant theory of concepts. The nominalists reject supernaturalism as unscientific, and the appeal to "intuition" as a thinly veiled subjectivism. They do not, however, reject the crucial consequence of Plato's theory: *the division of an entity's characteristics into two groups,* one of which is excluded from the concept designating the entity.

Denying that concepts have an objective basis in the facts of reality, nominalists declare that the source of concepts is a subjective human decision: men *arbitrarily* select certain characteristics to serve as the basis (the "essentials") for a classification; thereafter, they agree to apply the same term to any concretes that happen to exhibit these "essentials," no matter how diverse these concretes are in other respects. On this view, the concept (the term) means only those characteristics initially decreed to be "essential." The other characteristics of the subsumed concretes bear no necessary connection to the "essential" characteristics, and are excluded from the concept's meaning.

Observe that, while condemning Plato's *mystic* view of a concept's meaning, the nominalists embrace the same view in a *skeptic* version. Condemning the essence-accident dichotomy as implicitly arbitrary, they institute an *explicitly* arbitrary equivalent. Condemning Plato's "intuitive" selection of essences as a disguised subjectivism, they spurn the disguise and adopt subjectivism as their official theory—as though a concealed vice were heinous, but a brazenly flaunted one, rational. Condemning Plato's supernaturally determined essences, they declare that essences are *socially* determined, thus transferring to the province of *human whim* what had once been the prerogative of Plato's divine realm. The nominalists' "advance" over Plato consisted of *secularizing* his theory. To secularize an error is still to commit it.

Its form, however, changes. Nominalists do not say that a concept designates only an entity's "essence," excluding its "accidents." Their secularized version is: A concept is only a shorthand tag for the characteristics stated in its definition; a concept and its definition are interchangeable; *a concept means only its definition.*

It is the Platonic-nominalist approach to concept-formation, expressed in such views as these, that gives rise to the theory of the analytic-synthetic dichotomy. Yet its advocates commonly advance the dichotomy as a self-contained primary, independent of any particular theory of concepts. Indeed, they usually insist that the issue of concept-formation—since it is "empirical," not "logical"—is outside the province of philosophy. (!) (Thus, they use the dichotomy to discredit in advance any inquiry into the issues on which the dichotomy itself depends.)

In spite of this, however, they continue to advocate "conceptual analysis," and to distinguish which truths can—or cannot—be validated by its practice. One is expected to analyze concepts, without a knowledge of their source and nature—to determine their meaning, while ignorant of their relationship to concretes. How? The answer implicit in contemporary philosophical practice is: "Since people have already given concepts their meanings, we need only study common usage." In other words, paraphrasing Gait: "The concepts are here. How did they get here? Somehow." *(Atlas Shrugged)*

Since concepts are complex products of man's consciousness, any theory or approach which implies that they are irreducible primaries is invalidated by that fact alone. Without a theory of concepts as a foundation, one cannot, in reason, adopt *any* theory about the nature or kinds of propositions; propositions are only combinations of concepts.

The Objectivist theory of concepts undercuts the theory of the analytic-synthetic dichotomy at its root.

According to Objectivism, concepts "represent classifications of observed existents according to their relationships to other observed existents." (Ayn Rand, *Introduction to Objectivist Epistemology;* all further quotations in this section, unless otherwise identified, are from this work.) To form a concept, one mentally *isolates* a group of concretes (of distinct perceptual units), on the basis of observed similarities which distinguish them from all other known concretes (similarity is "the relationship between two or more existents which possess the same characteristic(s), but in different measure or degree"); then, by a process of omitting the particular measurements of these concretes, one *integrates* them into a single new mental unit: the concept, which subsumes all concretes of this kind (a potentially unlimited number). The integration is completed and retained by the selection of a perceptual symbol (a word) to designate it. "A concept is a mental integration of two or more units possessing the same distinguishing characteristic (s), with their particular measurements omitted."

By isolating and integrating perceived concretes, by reducing the number of mental units with which he has to deal, man is able to break up and organize his perceptual field, to engage in specialized study, and to retain an unlimited amount of information pertaining to an unlimited number of concretes. Conceptualization is a method of acquiring and retaining

knowledge of that which exists, on a scale inaccessible to the perceptual level of consciousness.

Since a word is a symbol for a concept, it has no meaning apart from the content of the concept it symbolizes. And since a concept is an integration of units, it has no content or meaning apart from its units. *The meaning of a concept consists of the units—the existents—which it integrates, including all the characteristics of these units.*

Observe that concepts mean *existents,* not arbitrarily selected portions of existents. There is no basis whatever—neither metaphysical nor epistemological, neither in the nature of reality nor of a conceptual consciouness—for a division of the characteristics of a concept's units into two groups, one of which is excluded from the concept's meaning.

Metaphysically, an entity is: all of the things which it is. Each of its characteristics has the same metaphysical status: each constitutes a part of the entity's identity.

Epistemologically, all the characteristics of the entities subsumed under a concept are discovered by the same basic method: by observation of these entities. The initial similarities, on the basis of which certain concretes were isolated and conceptually integrated, were grasped by a process of observation; all subsequently discovered characteristics of these concretes are discovered by the same method (no matter how complex the inductive procedures involved may become).

The fact that certain characteristics are, at a given time, *unknown* to man, does not indicate that these characteristics are excluded from the entity—or *from the concept.* A is A; existents are what they are, independent of the state of human knowledge; and a concept means the existents which it integrates. Thus, a concept subsumes and includes *all* the characteristics of its referents, known and not-yet-known.

(This does not mean that man is omniscient, or that he can capriciously ascribe any characteristics he chooses to the referents of his concepts. In order to discover that an entity possesses a certain characteristic, one must engage in a process of scientific study, observation and validation. Only then does one know that that characteristic is true of the entity and, therefore, is subsumed under the concept.)

"It is crucially important to grasp the fact that a concept is an 'open-end' classification which includes the yet-to-be-discovered characteristics of a

given group of existents. All of man's knowledge rests on that fact.

"The pattern is as follows: When a child grasps the concept 'man,' the knowledge represented by that concept in his mind consists of perceptual data, such as man's visual appearance, the sound of his voice, etc. When the child learns to differentiate between living entities and inanimate matter, he ascribes a new characteristic, 'living,' to the entity he designates as 'man.' When the child learns to differentiate among various types of consciousness, he includes a new characteristic in his concept of man, 'rational' —and so on. The implicit principle guiding this process, is: 'I know that there exists such an entity as man; I know many of his characteristics, but he has many others which I do not know and must discover.' The same principle directs the study of every other kind of perceptually isolated and conceptualized existents.

"The same principle directs the accumulation and transmission of mankind's knowledge. From a savage's knowledge of man ... [to the present level], the *concept* 'man' has not changed: it refers to the same kind of entities. What has changed and grown is the knowledge of these entities."

What, then, is the meaning of the concept "man"? "Man" means a certain type of entity, a rational animal, including *all* the characteristics of this entity (anatomical, physiological, psychological, etc., as well as the relations of these characteristics to those of other entities)—all the characteristics already known, and all those ever to be discovered. Whatever is true of the entity, is meant by the concept.

It follows that there are no grounds on which to distinguish "analytic" from "synthetic" propositions. Whether one states that "A man is a rational animal," or that "A man has only two eyes"—in both cases, the predicated characteristics are true of man and are, therefore, included in the concept "man." The meaning of the first statement is: "A certain type of entity, including all its characteristics (among which are rationality and animality) is: a rational animal." The meaning of the second is: "A certain type of entity, including all its characteristics (among which is the possession of only two eyes) has: only two eyes." Each of these statements is an instance of the Law of Identity; each is a "tautology"; to deny either is to contradict the meaning of the concept "man," and thus to endorse a self-contradiction.

A similar type of analysis is applicable to every true statement. Every truth about a given existent(s) reduces, in basic pattern, to: "X is: one or

more of the things which it is." The predicate in such a case states some characteristic(s) of the subject; but since it is a characteristic of the subject, the *concept(s)* designating the subject in fact includes the predicate from the outset. If one wishes to use the term "tautology" in this context, then *all* truths are "tautological." (And, by the same reasoning, all falsehoods are self-contradictions.)

When making a statement about an existent, one has, ultimately, only two alternatives: "X (which means X, the existent, including all its characteristics) is what it is"—or: "X *is not* what it is." The choice between truth and falsehood is the choice between "tautology" (in the sense explained) and self-contradiction.

In the realm of propositions, there is only one basic epistemological distinction: *truth vs. falsehood,* and only one fundamental issue: By what method is truth discovered and validated? To plant a dichotomy at the base of human knowledge—to claim that there are opposite *methods* of validation and opposite types of truth—is a procedure without grounds or justification.

In one sense, *no* truths are "analytic." No proposition can be validated merely by "conceptual analysis"; the content of the concept—i.e., the characteristics of the existents it integrates—must be discovered and validated by observation, before any "analysis" is possible. In another sense, *all* truths are "analytic." When some characteristic of an entity *has* been discovered, the proposition ascribing it to the entity will be seen to be "logically true" (its opposite would contradict the meaning of the concept designating the entity). In either case, the analytic-logical-tautological vs. synthetic-factual dichotomy collapses.

To justify their view that some of an entity's characteristics are excluded from the concept designating it, both Platonists and nominalists appeal to the distinction between the "essential" and the "non-essential" characteristics of an entity. For the Platonists, this distinction represents a *metaphysical* division, *intrinsic* to the entity, independent of man and of man's knowledge. For the nominalists, it represents a *subjective* human decree, independent of the facts of reality. For both schools, whatever their terminological or other differences, a concept means only the essential (or defining) characteristics of its units.

Neither school provides an *objective* basis for the distinction between an entity's "essential" and "non-essential" characteristics. (Supernaturalism—

in its avowed or secularized form—is not an objective basis for anything.) Neither school explains why such a distinction is objectively required in the process of conceptualization.

This explanation is provided by Objectivism, and exposes the basic error in the Platonic-nominalist position.

When a man reaches a certain level of conceptual complexity, he needs to discover a method of organizing and interrelating his concepts; he needs a method that will enable him to keep each of his concepts clearly distinguished from all the others, each connected to a specific group of existents clearly distinguished from the other existents he knows. (In the early stages of conceptual development, when a child's concepts are comparatively few in number and designate directly perceivable concretes, "ostensive definitions" are sufficient for this purpose.) The method consists of *defining* each concept, by specifying the characteristic(s) of its units upon which the greatest number of their other known characteristics depends, and which distinguishes the units from all other known existents. The characteristic(s) which fulfills this requirement is designated the *"essential"* characteristic, in that context of knowledge.

Essential characteristics are determined contextually. The characteristic(s) which most fundamentally distinguishes a certain type of entity from all other existents known at the time, may not do so within a wider field of knowledge, when more existents become known and/or more of the entity's characteristics are discovered. The characteristic(s) designated as "essential"—and the definition which expresses it—may alter as one's cognitive context expands. Thus, essences are not intrinsic to entities, in the Platonic (or Aristotelian) manner; they are epistemological, not metaphysical. A definition in terms of essential characteristics "is a device of man's method of cognition—a means of classifying, condensing and integrating an ever-growing body of knowledge."

Nor is the designation of essential characteristics a matter of arbitrary choice or subjective decree. A contextual definition can be formulated only after one has fully considered *all* the known facts pertaining to the units in question: their similarities, their differences from other existents, the causal relationships among their characteristics, etc. This knowledge determines which characteristic(s) is *objectively* essential—and, therefore, which definition is objectively correct—in a given cognitive context. Although the

definition explicitly mentions only the essential characteristic(s), it implies and condenses all of this knowledge.

On the objective, contextual view of essences, a concept does *not* mean only the essential or defining characteristics of its units. To designate a certain characteristic as "essential" or "defining" is to *select,* from the total content of the concept, the characteristic that best condenses and differentiates that content in a specific cognitive context. Such a selection presupposes the relationship between the concept and its units: it presupposes that the concept is an integration of units, and that its content consists of its units, including *all* their characteristics. It is only because of this fact that the same concept can receive varying definitions in varying cognitive contexts.

When "rational animal" is selected as the definition of "man," this does not mean that the concept "man" becomes a shorthand tag for "anything whatever that has rationality and animality." It does not mean that the concept "man" is interchangeable with the phrase "rational animal," and that all of man's other characteristics are excluded from the concept. It means: A certain type of entity, including all its characteristics, is, in the present context of knowledge, most fundamentally distinguished from all other entities by the fact that it is a rational animal. All the presently available knowledge of man's *other* characteristics is required to validate this definition, and is implied by it. All these other characteristics remain part of the content of the concept "man."

The nominalist view that a concept is merely a shorthand tag for its definition, represents a profound failure to grasp the function of a definition in the process of concept-formation. The penalty for this failure is that the process of definition, in the hands of the nominalists, achieves the exact opposite of its actual purpose. The purpose of a definition is to keep a concept distinct from all others, *to keep it connected to a specific group of existents.* On the nominalist view, it is precisely this connection that is severed: as soon as a concept is defined, it ceases to designate *existents,* and designates instead only the defining characteristic.

And further: On a rational view of definitions, a definition organizes and condenses—and thus helps one to retain—a wealth of knowledge about the characteristics of a concept's units. On the nominalist view, it is precisely this knowledge that is *discarded* when one defines a concept: as soon as a

defining characteristic is chosen, all the other characteristics of the units are banished from the concept, which shrivels to mean merely the definition. For instance, as long as a child's concept of "man" is retained ostensively, the child knows that man has a head, two eyes, two arms, etc.; on the nominalist view, as soon as the child defines "man," he discards all this knowledge; thereafter, "man" means to him only: "a thing with rationality and animality."

On the nominalist view, the process of defining a concept is a process of cutting the concept off from its referents, and of systematically evading what one knows about their characteristics. Definition, the very tool which is designed to promote conceptual integration, becomes an agent of its destruction, a means of *disintegration.*

The advocates of the view that a concept means its definition, cannot escape the knowledge that people actually use concepts to designate *existents.* (When a woman says: "I married a wonderful man," it is clear to most philosophers that she does not mean: "I married a wonderful combination of rationality and animality.") Having severed the connection between a concept and its referents, such philosophers sense that somehow this connection nevertheless exists and is important. To account for it, they appeal to a theory which goes back many centuries and is now commonly regarded as uncontroversial: the theory that a concept has *two kinds or dimensions* of meaning. Traditionally, these are referred to as a concept's *"extension"* (or "denotation") and its *"intension"* (or "connotation").

By the "extension" of a concept, the theory's advocates mean the concretes subsumed under that concept. By the "intension" of a concept, they mean those characteristics of the concretes which are stated in the concept's definition. (Today, this is commonly called the "conventional" intension; the distinction among various types of intension, however, merely compounds the errors of the theory, and is irrelevant in this context.) Thus, in the extensional sense, "man" means Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Tom, Dick, Harry, etc. In the intensional sense, "man" means "rational animal."

A standard logic text summarizes the theory as follows: "The intension of a term, as we have noted, is what is usually called its definition. The extension, on the other hand, simply refers us to the set of objects to which the definition applies.... Extension and intension are thus intimately related, but they refer to objects in diferent ways—extension to a listing of the

individuals who fall within its quantitative scope, intension to the qualities or characteristics of the individuals." (Lionel Ruby, *Logic: An Introduction.)*

This theory introduces another artificial split: between an existent and its characteristics. In the sense in which a concept means its referents (its extensional meaning), it does not mean or refer to their characteristics (its intensional meaning), and vice versa. One's choice, in effect, is: either to mean existents, apart from their characteristics—or (certain) characteristics, apart from the existents which possess them.

In fact, neither of these alleged types of meaning is metaphysically or epistemologically possible.

A concept cannot mean existents, apart from their characteristics. A thing is—what it is; its characteristics constitute its identity. An existent apart from its characteristics would be an existent apart from its identity, which means: a nothing, a non-existent. To be conscious of an existent *is* to be conscious of (some of) its characteristics. This is true on all levels of consciousness, but it is particularly obvious on the conceptual level. When one conceptualizes a group of existents, one isolates them mentally from others, *on the basis of certain of their characteristics.* A concept cannot integrate—or mean—a miscellaneous grab bag of objects; it can only integrate, designate, refer to and *mean:* existents of a certain kind, existents possessing certain characteristics.

Nor can the concept of an existent mean its characteristics (some or all), apart from the existent which possesses them. A characteristic is an aspect of an existent. It is not a disembodied, Platonic universal. Just as a concept cannot mean existents apart from their identity, so it cannot mean identities apart from that which exists. Existence is Identity *(Atlas Shrugged).*

The theory that a concept means its definition, is not improved when it is combined with the view that, in another sense, a concept means its "extension." Two errors do not make a truth. They merely produce greater chaos and confusion. The truth is that a concept means the existents it integrates, including all their characteristics. It is this view of a concept's meaning that keeps man's concepts anchored to reality. On this view, the dichotomy between "analytic" and "synthetic" propositions cannot arise.

Necessity and Contingency

The theory of the analytic-synthetic dichotomy has its roots in two types of error: one epistemological, the other metaphysical. The epistemological error, as I have discussed, is an incorrect view of the nature of concepts. The metaphysical error is: the dichotomy between necessary and contingent facts.

This theory goes back to Greek philosophy, and was endorsed in some form by virtually all philosophical traditions prior to Kant. In the form in which it is here relevant, the theory holds that some facts are inherent in the nature of reality; they *must* exist; they are "necessary." Other facts, however, *happen* to exist in the world that men now observe, but they did not *have to* exist; they could have been otherwise; they are "contingent." For instance, that water is wet would be a "necessary" fact; that water turns to ice at a certain temperature, would be "contingent."

Given this dichotomy, the question arises: How does one know, in a particular case, that a certain fact is necessary? Observation, it was commonly said, is insufficient for this purpose. "Experience," wrote Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason,* "tells us, indeed, what is, but not that it must necessarily be so, and not otherwise." To establish that something is a fact, one employs observation and the appropriate inductive procedures; but, it was claimed, to establish that something is a fact is not yet to show that the fact in question is necessary. Some warrant or guarantee, over and above the fact's existence, is required if the fact is to be necessary; and some insight, over and above that yielded by observation and induction, is required to grasp this guarantee.

In the pre-Kantian era, it was common to appeal to some form of "intellectual intuition" for this purpose. In some cases, it was said, one could just "see" that a certain fact was necessary. *How* one could see this remained a mystery. It appeared that human beings had a strange, inexplicable capacity to grasp by unspecified means that certain facts not only were, but had to be. In other cases, no such intuition operated, and the facts in question were deemed contingent.

In the post-Kantian era, appeals to "intellectual intuition" lost favor among philosophers, but the necessary-contingent dichotomy went on.

Perpetuated in various forms in the nineteenth century, it was reinterpreted in the twentieth as follows: since facts are learned only by experience, and experience does not reveal necessity, the concept of "necessary facts" must be abandoned. Facts, it is now held, are one and all contingent—and the propositions describing them are "contingent truths." As for necessary truths, they are merely the products of man's linguistic or conceptual conventions. They do not refer to facts, they are empty, "analytic," "tautological." In this manner, the necessary-contingent dichotomy is used to support the alleged distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions. Today, it is a commonplace for philosophers to remark that "factual" statements are "synthetic" and "contingent," whereas "necessary" statements are "non-factual" and "analytic."

(Contemporary philosophers prefer to talk about propositions or statements, rather than about facts; they rarely say that *facts* are contingent, attributing contingency instead to *statements* about facts. There is nothing to justify this mode of speech, and I shall not adhere to it in discussing their views.)

Observe that both the traditional pre-Kantians and the contemporary conventionalists are in essential agreement: both endorse the necessary-contingent dichotomy, and both hold that necessary truths cannot be validated by experience. The difference is only this: for the traditional philosophers, necessity is a metaphysical phenomenon, grasped by an act of intuition; for the conventionalists, it is a product of man's subjective choices. The relationship between the two viewpoints is similar to the relationship between Platonists and nominalists on the issue of essences. In both cases, the moderns adopt the fundamentals of the traditionalist position; their "contribution" is merely to interpret that position in an avowedly subjectivist manner.

In the present issue, the basic error of both schools is the view that facts, some or all, are contingent. As far as metaphysical reality is concerned (omitting human actions from consideration, for the moment), there are no "facts which happen to be but could have been otherwise" as against "facts which must be." There are only: facts which *are.*

The view that facts are contingent—that the way things actually are is only one among a number of alternative possibilities, that things could have been different metaphysically—represents a failure to grasp the Law of

Identity. Since things are what they are, since everything that exists possesses a specific identity, nothing in reality can occur causelessly or by chance. The nature of an entity determines what it can do and, in any given set of circumstances, dictates what it *will* do. The Law of Causality is entailed by the Law of Identity. Entities follow certain laws of action in consequence of their identity, and have no alternative to doing so.

Metaphysically, all facts are inherent in the identities of the entities that exist; i.e., all facts are "necessary." In this sense, to be *is* to be "necessary." The concept of "necessity," in a metaphysical context, is superfluous.

(The problem of epistemology is: how to discover facts, how to discover what is. Its task is to formulate the proper methods of induction, the methods of acquiring and validating scientific knowledge. There is no problem of grasping that a fact is necessary, after one has grasped that it is a fact.)

For many centuries, the theory of "contingent facts" was associated with a supernaturalistic metaphysics; such facts, it was said, are the products of a divine creator who could have created them differently—and who can change them at will. This view represents the metaphysics of miracles—the notion that an entity's actions are unrelated to its nature, that anything is possible to an entity regardless of its identity. On this view, an entity acts as it does, not because of its nature, but because of an omnipotent God's decree.

Contemporary advocates of the theory of "contingent facts" hold, in essence, the same metaphysics. They, too, hold that anything is possible to an entity, that its actions are unrelated to its nature, that the universe which exists is only one of a number of "possible worlds." They merely omit God, but they retain the consequences of the religious view. Once more, theirs is a secularized mysticism.

The fundamental error in all such doctrines is the failure to grasp that *existence is a self-sufficient primary.* It is not a product of a supernatural dimension, or of anything else. There is nothing antecedent to existence, nothing apart from it—*and no alternative to it.* Existence exists—and only existence exists. Its existence and its nature are irreducible and unalterable.

The climax of the "miraculous" view of existence is represented by those existentialists who echo Heidegger, demanding: "Why is there any being at all and not rather nothing?" —i.e., why does existence exist? This is the

projection of a zero as an alternative to existence, with the demand that one explain why existence exists and not the zero.

Non-existentialist philosophers typically disdain Heidegger's alleged question, writing it off as normal existentialist lunacy. They do not apparently realize that in holding facts to be contingent, they are committing the same error. When they claim that facts could have been otherwise, they are claiming that *existence* could have been otherwise. They scorn the existentialists for projecting an alternative to the existence of existence, but spend their time projecting alternatives to the *identity* of existence.

While the existentialists clamor to know why there is something and not nothing, the non-existentialists answer them (by implication): "This is a ridiculous question. Of course, there is something. The real question is: Why is the something what it is, and not something else?"

A major source of confusion, in this issue, is the failure to distinguish *metaphysical* facts from *man-made* facts—i.e., facts which are inherent in the identities of that which exists, from facts which depend upon the exercise of human volition. Because man has free will, no human choice—and no phenomenon which is a product of human choice—is metaphysically necessary. In regard to any man-made fact, it is valid to claim that man *has* chosen thus, but it was not inherent in the nature of existence for him to have done so; he could have chosen otherwise. For instance, the U.S. did not have to consist of 50 states; men could have subdivided the larger ones or consolidated the smaller ones, etc.

Choice, however, is not chance. Volition is not an exception to the Law of Causality; it is a type of causation. Further, metaphysical facts are unalterable by man, and limit the alternatives open to his choice. Man can rearrange the materials that exist in reality, but he cannot violate their identity; he cannot escape the laws of nature. "Nature, to be commanded, must be obeyed."

Only in regard to the man-made is it valid to claim: "It happens to be, but it could have been otherwise." Even here, the term "contingent" is highly misleading. Historically, that term has been used to designate a metaphysical category of much wider scope than the realm of human action; and it has always been associated with a metaphysics which, in one form or another, denies the facts of Identity and Causality. The "necessary-contingent" terminology serves only to introduce confusion, and should be abandoned.

What is required in this context is the distinction between the "metaphysical" and the "man-made."

The existence of human volition cannot be used to justify the theory that there is a dichotomy of *propositions* or of *truths.* Propositions about metaphysical facts and propositions about man-made facts do not have different characteristics *qua propositions.* They differ merely in their subject matter, but then so do the propositions of astronomy and of immunology. Truths about metaphysical and about manmade facts are learned and validated by the same process: by observation; and, *qua truths*, both are equally necessary. Some *facts* are not necessary, but all *truths* are.

Truth is the identification of a fact of reality. Whether the fact in question is metaphysical or man-made, the fact determines the truth: if the fact exists, there is no alternative in regard to what is true. For instance, the fact that the U.S. has 50 states was not metaphysically necessary—but as long as this is men's choice, the proposition that "The U.S. has 50 states" is necessarily *true.* A true proposition *must* describe the facts as they are. In this sense, a "necessary truth" is a redundancy, and a "contingent truth" a self-contradiction.

Logic and Experience

Throughout its history, philosophy has been torn by the conflict between the rationalists and the empiricists. The former stress the role of logic in man's acquisition of knowledge, while minimizing the role of experience; the latter claim that experience is the source of man's knowledge, while minimizing the role of logic. This split between logic and experience is institutionalized in the theory of the analytic-synthetic dichotomy.

Analytic statements, it is said, are independent of experience; they are "logical" propositions. Synthetic statements, on the other hand, are devoid of logical necessity; they are "empirical" propositions.

Any theory that propounds an opposition between the logical and the empirical, represents a failure to grasp the nature of logic and its role in human cognition. Man's knowledge is not acquired by logic apart from experience or by experience apart from logic, but by *the application of logic*

to experience. All truths are the product of a logical identification of the facts of experience.

Man is born *tabula rasa;* all his knowledge is based on and derived from the evidence of his senses. To reach the distinctively human level of cognition, man must conceptualize his perceptual data—and conceptualization is a process which is neither automatic nor infallible. Man needs to discover a method to guide this process, if it is to yield conclusions which correspond to the facts of reality—i.e., which represent knowledge. The principle at the base of the proper method is the fundamental principle of metaphysics: the Law of Identity. In reality, contradictions cannot exist; in a cognitive process, a contradiction is the proof of an error. Hence the method man must follow: to identify the facts he observes, in a non-contradictory manner. This method is logic—"the art of non-contradictory identification." *(Atlas Shrugged.)* Logic must be employed at every step of a man's conceptual development, from the formation of his first concepts to the discovery of the most complex scientific laws and theories. Only when a conclusion is based on a noncontradictory identification and integration of all the evidence available at a given time, can it qualify as knowledge.

The failure to recognize that logic is man's method of cognition, has produced a brood of artificial splits and dichotomies which represent restatements of the analytic-synthetic dichotomy from various aspects. Three in particular are prevalent today: logical truth vs. factual truth; the logically possible vs. the empirically possible; and the a priori vs. the a posteriori.

The logical-factual dichotomy opposes truths which are validated "merely" by the use of logic (the analytic ones), to truths which describe the facts of experience (the synthetic ones). Implicit in this dichotomy is the view that logic is a subjective game, a method of manipulating arbitrary symbols, not a method of acquiring knowledge.

It is the use of logic that enables man to determine what is and what is not a fact. To introduce an opposition between the "logical" and the "factual" is to create a split between consciousness and existence, between truths in accordance with man's method of cognition and truths in accordance with the facts of reality. The result of such a dichotomy is that logic is divorced from reality ("Logical truths are empty and conventional") —and reality becomes unknowable ("Factual truths are contingent and

uncertain"). This amounts to the claim that man has no method of cognition, i.e., no way of acquiring knowledge.

The acquisition of knowledge, as Ayn Rand has observed, involves two fundamental questions: *"What* do I know?" and *"How* do I know it?" The advocates of the logical-factual dichotomy tell man, in effect: "You can't know the 'what'—because there is no 'how.' " (These same philosophers claim to know the truth of their position by means of unanswerable logical argument.)

To grasp the nature of their epistemological procedure, consider a mathematician who would claim that there is a dichotomy between two types of truth in the matter of adding columns of figures: truths which state the actual sum of a given column versus truths which are reached by adherence to the laws of addition—the "summational truths" vs. the "additive truths." The former represent the actual sums—which, however, are unfortunately unprovable and unknowable, since they cannot be arrived at by the methods of addition; the latter, which are perfectly certain and necessary, are unfortunately a subjective fantasy-creation, with no relationship to actual sums in the actual world. (At this point, a pragmatist mathematician comes along and provides his "solution": "Adding," he tells us, "may be subjective, but it works." Why does it? How does he know it does? What about tomorrow? "Those questions," he replies, "aren't fruitful.")

If mathematicians were to accept this doctrine, the destruction of mathematics would follow. When philosophers accept such a doctrine, the same consequences may be expected—with only this difference: the province of philosophy embraces the total of human knowledge.

Another restatement of the analytic-synthetic dichotomy is the view that opposes the "logically" possible and the "empirically" possible.

If the proposition that a given phenomenon exists is not self-contradictory, then that phenomenon, it is claimed, is "logically" possible; if the proposition is self-contradictory, then the phenomenon is "logically" impossible. Certain phenomena, however, although logically possible, are contrary to the "contingent" laws of nature that men discover by experience; these phenomena are "empirically" —but not "logically"—impossible. Thus, a married bachelor is "logically" impossible; but a bachelor who can fly to the moon by means of flapping his arms is merely "empirically"

impossible (i.e., the proposition that such a bachelor exists is not self-contradictory, but such a bachelor is not in accordance with the laws that happen to govern the universe).

The metaphysical basis of this dichotomy is the premise that a violation of the laws of nature would not involve a contradiction. But as we have seen, the laws of nature are inherent in the identities of the entities that exist. A violation of the laws of nature would require that an entity act in contradiction to its identity; i.e., it would require the existence of a contradiction. To project such a violation is to endorse the "miraculous" view of the universe, as already discussed.

The epistemological basis of this dichotomy is the view that a concept consists only of its definition. According to the dichotomy, it is logically impermissible to contradict the definition of a concept; what one asserts by this means is "logically" impossible. But to contradict any of the *non-defining* characteristics of a concept's referents, is regarded as logically permissible; what one asserts in such a case is merely "empirically" impossible.

Thus, a "married bachelor" contradicts the definition of "bachelor" and hence is regarded as "logically" impossible. But a "bachelor who can fly to the moon by means of flapping his arms" is regarded as "logically" possible, because the *definition* of "bachelor" ("an unmarried man") does not specify his means of locomotion. What is ignored here is the fact that the concept "bachelor" is a subcategory of the concept "man," that as such it includes all the characteristics of the entity "man," and that these exclude the ability to fly by flapping his arms. Only by reducing a concept to its definition and by evading all the other characteristics of its referents can one claim that such projections do not involve a self-contradiction.

Those who attempt to distinguish the "logically" possible and the "empirically" possible commonly maintain that the "logically" impossible is ummaginable or inconceivable, whereas the merely "empirically" impossible is at least imaginable or conceivable, and that this difference supports the distinction. For instance, "ice which is not solid" (a "logical" impossibility) is inconceivable; but "ice which sinks in water" (a merely "empirical" impossibility) is at least conceivable, they claim, even though it does not exist; one need merely visualize a block of ice floating on water, and suddenly plummeting straight to the bottom.

This argument confuses Walt Disney with metaphysics. That a man can project an image or draw an animated cartoon at variance with the facts of reality, does not alter the facts; it does not alter the nature or the potentialities of the entities which exist. An image of ice sinking in water does not alter the nature of ice; it does not constitute evidence that it is possible for ice to sink in water. It is evidence only of man's capacity to engage in fantasy. Fantasy is not a form of cognition.

Further: the fact that man possesses the capacity to fantasize does not mean that the opposite of demonstrated truths is "imaginable" or "conceivable." In a serious, epistemological sense of the word, a man *cannot* conceive the opposite of a proposition he knows to be true (as apart from propositions dealing with man-made facts). If a proposition asserting a metaphysical fact has been demonstrated to be true, this means that that fact has been demonstrated to be inherent in the identities of the entities in question, and that any alternative to it would require the existence of a contradiction. Only ignorance or evasion can enable a man to attempt to project such an alternative. If a man does not know that a certain fact has been demonstrated, he will not know that its denial involves a contradiction. If a man does know it, but evades his knowledge and drops his full cognitive context, there is no limit to what he can pretend to conceive. But what one can project by means of ignorance or evasion, is philosophically irrelevant. It does not constitute a basis for instituting two separate categories of possibility.

There is no distinction between the "logically" and the "empirically" possible (or impossible). All truths, as I have said, are the product of a logical identification of the facts of experience. This applies as much to the identification of possibilities as of actualities.

The same considerations invalidate the dichotomy between the a priori and the a posteriori. According to this variant, certain propositions (the analytic ones) are validated *independently of experience,* simply by an analysis of the definitions of their constituent concepts; these propositions are "a priori." Others (the synthetic ones) are dependent upon experience for their validation; they are "a posteriori."

As we have seen, definitions represent condensations of a wealth of observations, i.e., a wealth of "empirical" knowledge; definitions can be arrived at and validated only on the basis of experience. It is senseless,

therefore, to contrast propositions which are true "by definition" and propositions which are true "by experience." If an "empirical" truth is one derived from, and validated by reference to, perceptual observations, then all truths are "empirical." Since truth is the identification of a fact of reality, a "non-empirical truth" would be an identification of a fact of reality which is validated independently of observation of reality. This would imply a theory of innate ideas, or some equally mystical construct.

Those who claim to distinguish a posteriori and a priori propositions commonly maintain that certain truths (the synthetic, factual ones) are *"empirically falsifiable,"* whereas others (the analytic, logical ones) are not. In the former case, it is said, one can specify experiences which, if they occurred, would invalidate the proposition; in the latter, one cannot. For instance, the proposition "Cats give birth only to kittens" is "empirically falsifiable" because one can invent experiences that would refute it such as the spectacle of tiny elephants emerging from a cat's womb. But the proposition "Cats are animals" is not "empirically falsifiable" because "cat" is *defined* as a species of animal. In the former case, the proposition remains true only as long as experience continues to bear it out; therefore, it depends on experience, i.e., it is a posteriori. In the latter case, the truth of the proposition is immune to any imaginable change in experience and, therefore, is independent of experience, i.e., is a priori.

Observe the inversion propounded by this argument: a proposition can qualify as a *factual, empirical* truth only if man is able to evade the facts of experience and arbitrarily to invent a set of impossible circumstances that contradict these facts; but a truth whose opposite is beyond man's power of invention, is regarded as independent of and irrelevant to the nature of reality, i.e., as an arbitrary product of human "convention."

Such is the unavoidable consequence of the attempt to divorce logic and experience.

As I have said, knowledge cannot be acquired by experience apart from logic, nor by logic apart from experience. Without the use of logic, man has no method of drawing conclusions from his perceptual data; he is confined to range-of-the-moment observations, but any perceptual fantasy that occurs to him qualifies as a future possibility which can invalidate his "empirical" propositions. And without reference to the facts of experience, man has no basis for his "logical" propositions, which become mere arbitrary products

of his own invention. Divorced from logic, the arbitrary exercise of the human imagination systematically undercuts the "empirical"; and divorced from the facts of experience, the same imagination arbitrarily creates the "logical."

I challenge anyone to invent a more thorough way of invalidating *all* of human knowledge.

Conclusion

The ultimate result of the theory of the analytic-synthetic dichotomy is the following verdict pronounced on human cognition: if the denial of a proposition is inconceivable, if there is no possibility that any fact of reality can contradict it, i.e., if the proposition represents knowledge which is *certain,* then it does not represent knowledge of reality. In other words: if a proposition cannot be wrong, it cannot be right. A proposition qualifies as factual only when it asserts facts which are still unknown, i.e., only when it represents a hypothesis; should a hypothesis be proved and become a certainty, it ceases to refer to facts and ceases to represent knowledge of reality. If a proposition is conclusively demonstrated—so that to deny it is obviously to endorse a logical contradiction—then, *in virtue of this fact,* the proposition is written off as a product of human convention or arbitrary whim.

This means: *a proposition is regarded as arbitrary precisely because it has been logically proved.* The fact that a proposition cannot be refuted, refutes it (i.e., removes it from reality). A proposition can retain a connection to facts only insofar as it has not been validated by man's method of cognition, i.e., by the use of logic. Thus proof is made the disqualifying element of knowledge, and knowledge is made a function of human ignorance.

This theory represents a total epistemological inversion: it penalizes cognitive success for being success. Just as the altruist mentality penalizes the good for being the good, so the analytic-synthetic mentality penalizes knowledge for being knowledge. Just as, according to altruism, a man is entitled only to what he has not earned, so, according to this theory, a man is

entitled to claim as knowledge only what he has not proved. Epistemological humility becomes the prerequisite of cognition: "the meek shall inherit the truth."

The philosopher most responsible for these inversions is Kant. Kant's system secularized the mysticism of the preceding centuries and thereby gave it a new lease on life in the modern world. In the religious tradition, "necessary" truths were commonly held to be consequences of God's mode of thought. Kant substituted the "innate structure of the human mind" for God, as the source and creator of "necessary" truths (which thus became independent of the facts of reality).

The philosophers of the twentieth century merely drew the final consequences of the Kantian view. If it is man's mode of thought (independent of reality) that creates "necessary" truths, they argued, then these are not fixed or absolute; men have a choice in regard to their modes of thought; what the mind giveth, the mind taketh away. Thus, the contemporary conventionalist viewpoint.

We can know only the "phenomenal," mind-created realm, according to Kant; in regard to reality, knowledge is impossible. We can be certain only within the realm of our own conventions, according to the moderns; in regard to facts, certainty is impossible.

The moderns represent a logical, consistent development from Kant's premises. They represent Kant plus choice—a voluntaristic Kantianism, a whim-worshiping Kantianism. Kant marked the cards and made reason an agent of distortion. The moderns are playing with the same deck; their contribution is to play it deuces wild, besides.

Now observe what is left of philosophy in consequence of this neo-Kantianism.

Metaphysics has been all but obliterated: its most influential opponents have declared that metaphysical statements are neither analytic nor synthetic, and therefore are meaningless.

Ethics has been virtually banished from the province of philosophy: some groups have claimed that ethical statements are neither analytic nor synthetic, but are mere "emotive ejaculations"—and other groups have consigned ethics to the province of the man in the street, claiming that philosophers may analyze the language of ethical statements, but are not competent to prescribe ethical norms.

Politics has been discarded by virtually all philosophic schools: insofar as politics deals with values, it has been relegated to the same status as ethics.

Epistemology, the theory of knowledge, the science that defines the rules by which man is to acquire knowledge of facts, has been disintegrated by the notion that facts are the subject matter of "synthetic," "empirical" propositions and, therefore, are outside the province of philosophy—with the result that the special sciences are now left adrift in a rising tide of irrationalism.

What we are witnessing is the self-liquidation of philosophy.

To regain philosophy's realm, it is necessary to challenge and reject the fundamental premises which are responsible for today's debacle. A major step in that direction is the elimination of the death carrier known as the analytic-synthetic dichotomy.